

Using Task Forces to Improve the Management of Service Delivery

L'viv, Ukraine

Background

The deteriorating economic situation and the limited funds being made available to local governments by the Government of Ukraine required local officials to make difficult decisions about how to use available resources most effectively. In Ukraine the Soviet legacy of narrow, vertically integrated reporting made cooperation and coordination among city departments difficult. There were few functional information systems that allowed the various local government units to compare the effectiveness of their work, develop experience, and fully exploit their human resources.

In spring 1994, the Mayor of the City of L'viv (population 798,000) attended a workshop for 20 key local officials that was organized to define the city's most urgent problems. As a result, the mayor decided to tackle critical problem areas by forming special task forces composed of municipal officials from different city departments. The purposes of the task forces were to define objectives, develop plans in key problem areas, and develop strategies to mobilize resources and implement solutions. In addition, the task forces were intended to encourage city officials to feel that the city was an autonomous entity able to take the initiative in defining and solving its problems.

Innovation

Task forces were formed in 1995 to address five of the city's most urgent problems: (1) the water supply system, (2) information management, (3) solid waste disposal, (4) financial reform, and (5) economic development. The task forces aimed to develop recommendations to address these problem areas, which would then be approved by the city council.

Task force leaders were appointed by the mayor and the executive committee of the city council, and the leaders received a 30 percent salary bonus for their work. Task force members were appointed by the mayor. Each task force had about ten members, half of whom were not city employees. Initially the task forces met monthly. They also solicited ideas from universities and institutes. Recommendations were submitted to the council's executive committee for approval and then to the city council. An advertised public hearing to obtain citizen input was an integral part of the deliberation process of each task force.

Results

Reports and recommendations have been submitted by all of the task forces. In January 1996 the executive committee of the city council approved the recommendations of the solid waste task force. The task force defined new responsibilities for individuals, businesses, and government in combating pollution problems. The water supply task force has helped design a World Bank water project. The information management task force has helped guide computerization of the city hall. The financial reform task force produced a report identifying recommended reforms.

The task force concept has enabled citizens to become actively involved in the local decision-making process. Implementing the task force concept requires: (1) a "champion" willing to introduce and encourage it, (2) a clear and solvable set of problems to address, (3) city officials and citizens with appropriate technical experience, and (4) a climate in which both city staff and the public are willing to offer their advice and input.

Summary

To tackle critical problem areas, the City of L'viv formed special task forces composed of municipal officials from different city departments. The task forces, which solicited citizen input through public hearings, have defined responsibilities in combating pollution problems, helped design a World Bank water project, guided computerization of the city hall, and identified recommended financial reforms.

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